

Irish Naturalist. (Vol. xxviii. no. 9.)

Fauna och Flora. (1919, Häft 4.)

Journ. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. (Vol. xxvi. no. 3.)

Revue Française d'Ornithologie. (Nos. 126-129.)

Scottish Naturalist. (Nos. 93-98.)

XIX.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

DEAR SIR,—I would be glad if you would kindly correct an error which appears in my letter on "*Hieraëtus ayresi*," which was printed in the October number of 'The Ibis,' 1919. The concluding lines should read: "which proves to be barely *sixteen* inches in length, and not  $17\frac{3}{4}$  inches as stated in my notes."

I am,

Yours faithfully,

Roberts Heights,  
Pretoria.  
6 December, 1919.

C. G. FINCH-DAVIES  
(Lt. 1st S.A.M.R.).

DEAR SIR,—A short time ago the Director of the South African Museum kindly sent me for examination the skin of a small Falcon, purporting to be a juvenile of the African Hobby *Falco cuvieri*. As soon as I saw the specimen it struck me that this was no Hobby, the wings being too short for any species of that group; and on further examining it I came to the conclusion that it was a young male of *Falco aesalon*. To make sure I took the specimen down to the Transvaal Museum for comparison with some young males of *F. aesalon* from Europe, and found it to agree with them in every respect. It is in the first juvenile plumage, which is not much worn. There are two feathers of the adult plumage amongst the upper tail-coverts, which are blue-grey with the characteristic dark shaft marks.

This specimen is labelled as having been procured at Durban, Natal. The question arises, is this locality correct; if so, it would mean an extraordinary extension of the range of this species, which, according to the latest B. O. U. List of British Birds, has not been recorded from further south in Africa than Nubia and Abyssinia.

The label is written in three different "hands." Firstly, there is in one handwriting the scientific name *Falco subbuteo*; *subbuteo* has been crossed out, and the specific name *cuvieri* written in Mr. W. L. Selater's handwriting; in a third hand the locality, date, and collector's name thus: "Durban, Natal, February 1891, T. D. Butler," and on the reverse of the label in the same hand "To be mounted for the Museum."

I have written to the Director, Dr. L. Péringuey, for information as to the history of this specimen, and the following is an extract from his reply:—

"As to the place of origin of this skin, namely Durban, I take it to be a correct record. Butler, of this Museum, secured a few birds in Durban; the correction in Selater's hand from *Falco subbuteo* into *Falco cuvieri* is probably due to its submittal to either Gurney or to the British Museum. You may rest assured that the bird was shot by Butler."

In a second communication he writes:—"Your letter to hand. The specimen of *Falco* I sent you is Butler's skin, the name *Falco subbuteo* juv. on the label is Trimen's (handwriting). The correction *cuvieri* is Selater's. Butler recognises his own bird, he shot it in 1891 and at the same time a Coot that has not been identified as yet. There can be no doubt about the locality and the shooter."

The above would go to show that the locality as given on the label is correct, and this being so, *F. aesalon* must be added to the South African Avifauna, but only as a very rare and probably accidental wanderer. I have not the slightest doubt as to the correctness of my identification. I have examined a juvenile of *F. cuvieri*, which is a much darker and otherwise differently coloured bird, and has besides much longer wings, and is, in fact, a true Hobby.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

Roberts Heights,  
Pretoria.  
19 January, 1920.

C. G. FINCH-DAVIES  
(Lt. 1st S.A.M.R.).

## The Systema Avium.

DEAR SIR,—It is an excellent idea to have an English-speaking Peoples' Nomenclature for the birds of the world. Therefore, the 'Systema Avium,' undertaken by a combined Committee of the A. O. U. and B. O. U., when completed, will be more than welcomed by ornithologists in general.

But why limit the Commission to these two countries and not include representatives from the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, the South African Union, &c.? If political delegates from these latter countries were competent to sit in the recent Council of Nations in France, surely in matters ornithological, experts in the same, may have an equal voice.

Referring to the "International Code of Zoological Nomenclature," as pertaining to ornithology, it has been "weighed in the balances and found wanting." Its very key-stone (bed-rock priority) is insecure—*i. e.* has no practical finality—a fatal flaw.

The only real road to finality, and that speedily, is for some competent body, such as an English-speaking Peoples' Commission, to issue AN AUTHORITATIVE LIST of bird-names—the oldest, if possible, but not necessarily. Then, time-honoured and appropriate names will have a chance, if they be not ornithologically incorrect. Take a simple instance. Almost every writer of importance for the last sixty years has used *Casuarus australis* for the Australian Cassowary—an appropriate and correct ornithological name. Now, for some supposed technical error, according to the "insecure key-stone" of the "International Code," we are informed we must employ the name *johnsonii* instead of *australis*. This adds confusion to the existing literature concerning the noble bird and is a drawback to the study of popular ornithology, which would be avoided were *Casuarus australis* declared "An Authoritative Name."

I am,

Yours, &c.,

Melbourne.  
Australia.

ARCHIBALD JAMES CAMPBELL,  
Colonial Member B. O. U.

15 January, 1920.

Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists'  
Union.

The Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union for 1920 was held on Wednesday, March 10, at the Offices of the Zoological Society of London, Dr. W. Eagle Clarke, President, in the Chair.

There were thirty-eight Members present.

The Minutes of the last Annual Meeting were read and confirmed. The Accounts were accepted and passed.

The Committee recommended that Dr. P. R. Lowe, B.A., M.B., B.C., be elected a member of the Committee, in the place of Mr. H. E. Howard who retires by seniority. This recommendation was confirmed by the Meeting.

The Annual Report of the Committee was read as follows :—

“The Committee regret they have to report that, although the Accounts for 1919 balanced, the finances of the Union are not in a satisfactory condition. On the 1st January, 1919, there was a balance of roughly £140. The whole of this has been expended during the current year and, in addition, they have exhausted special donations amounting to £110.

“The cause of the increase in expenditure is entirely due to the increase in the cost of publishing ‘The Ibis,’ which has risen from roughly £700 in 1918 to £1,000 in 1919, and this although the increases charged both for letterpress and for reproduction of plates have not been so great as those generally obtaining in the trade. During the present year, a further increase of 25 per cent. will have to be met.

“It is evident, therefore, that receipts will not meet expenditure in future years unless some special arrangements are made. In 1916 the subscription to the Union was raised from 20s. to 25s., and the Committee are loath to recommend a further increase until an effort has been made, and failed, to obtain the money by other means.

“When the Union was started, rules 7 and 8 read as follows :—

*Rule 7.* The funds derived from entrance fees and annual subscriptions shall be devoted primarily to the publication of ‘The Ibis.’

*Rule 8.* Should the sum thus obtained be insufficient to cover the liability incurred, the deficit shall be raised by an additional subscription, to be levied at the ensuing General Meeting.

“For many years the subscriptions failed to cover the cost of publishing ‘The Ibis,’ and additional subscriptions were annually levied on all members to cover the deficit. These subscriptions were as follows :—

	£	s.	d.
1862 .....	1	10	0
1863 .....	1	10	0
1864 .....	5	0	0
1865 .....	8	0	0
1866 .....	2	10	0
1867 .....	5	0	0
1868 .....	1	0	0
1869 .....		5	0
1870 .....		15	0
1871 .....	1	1	0

“It was not until 1878 that ‘The Ibis’ was self-supporting, but even in that year a *guarantee* fund had to be taken from the members for the publication of the Index.

“In 1881 there was a substantial balance of nearly £100.

“In 1882 a British List of Birds was commenced, and in 1884 a heavy debt was incurred on this account, which was not entirely liquidated until 1886. In 1887 there was a balance of a little over £80.

“In 1896 and 1897 a General Index for Series 4, 5, and 6 was published, but the Union was unable to meet the whole of the expenses, and a considerable sum was paid by the President.

“In 1898 a contemplated Subject Index was abandoned for want of funds, but was again taken up and completed in 1899, though only partly paid for in that year, the balance being carried over and finally settled in 1901.

“In 1904 it was reported that for the first year on record there were no outstanding accounts and that there was a *genuine* balance of £36. In the years previous it is recorded that many writers had been called on to pay the expenses of their articles and plates.

“In 1909 the balance rose to £224, but decreased by £100 in the following year on account of the payment of cost of the publication of the Jubilee Supplement.

“It will thus be seen that the Union has always more or less depended upon donations from members, and has never really had a balance which it could devote to the advancement of Ornithology by any means other than the publication of ‘The Ibis.’

“The Committee feel that this position is unworthy of a leading Ornithological Society, and that therefore some effort must be made to put it on a sounder financial basis.

“We are glad to be able to report that the Trustees of the British Museum have made a generous donation of £250 towards the cost of publishing Museum articles in ‘The Ibis,’ and it is hoped that the donation will be an annual one; but this alone will not suffice to meet the expected deficit.

“The Committee therefore recommend (1) That the Entrance Fee be increased from £2 to £4, and (2) That ‘The Ibis’ be sold to the public at the rate of 10s. per number, and to members at 8s. It is hoped that the amount received in this manner will approach another £200 per annum and that it may, together with the donation from the Trustees of the British Museum, meet the additional cost of publishing ‘The Ibis.’ If, however, it does not do so and also leave some balance in hand to meet anticipated expenditure on other publications, the Committee will be compelled to recommend an increase in the subscription at the next annual meeting.



“The last volume of ‘The Ibis’ is the sixty-first, and commences the eleventh series. It contains 826 pages, and is illustrated with twelve coloured plates, seven uncoloured plates, and three text-figures. The large size of the January number for this year is due to the fact that we have received several donations to enable us to pay for special articles and their illustrations, and subsequent numbers will probably revert to about their normal size.

“The sales of ‘The Ibis’ during 1919 have been very large owing to many persons who had ceased purchasing during the War making up their numbers. A few more Lists of Birds and copies of the General Index have also been sold.”

The Committee regret to report the death of the following members since the last Annual General Meeting:—F. R. S. Baxendale, Dr. J. Wigglesworth, E. Gibson, and F. W. Headley. .

The following gentleman has resigned:—C. M. Woodford.

The names of Messrs. W. W. Cordeaux, E. J. Johnstone, H. E. Rawson, J. Swinburne, and C. C. Treatt have been removed from the list of members under Rule 6.

The membership of the Union is given below in comparison with the previous five years:—

	1920.	1919.	1918.	1917.	1916.	1915.
Ordinary Members...	418	418	423	416	420	441
Extraordinary „ ...	1	1	1	1	1	1
Honorary „ ...	9	7	8	9	9	9
Hon. Lady „ ...	8	8	8	9	8	6
Colonial „ ...	10	9	9	10	10	10
Foreign „ ...	16	13	20	19	19	20

There are forty candidates for Ordinary Membership, and it is hoped that in subsequent years there will be a still further large increase, a fact which the Committee has kept in mind when deciding not to recommend any increase in the rate of subscription for the present.

In regard to the Godman-Salvin Medal the Committee are able to report that £178 7s. 3d. has been subscribed as shown in the Balance Sheet, but £21 of this has to

be credited to the General Memorial Fund, having been sent to the B. O. U. by mistake.

The amount will suffice to have a medal struck, and Mr. Wyon has already been entrusted with the work. It has been decided after consultation with various artists to have the heads of Messrs. Godman and Salvin depicted side by side on the face, and 'The Ibis,' as on our Journal, on the reverse, with an inscription "Presented to . . . ."

Messrs. Munt and Seth Smith were elected and consented to act as Scrutineers.

The following 40 candidates for Ordinary Membership were then balloted for and elected:—

- William Henry Makens Andrews.
- Charles F. Belcher.
- Frederick Spencer Beveridge.
- Major Frank William Borman.
- Major Allan Brooks, D.S.O.
- Thomas Alfred Coward, F.Z.S., F.E.S.
- Jean Delacour.
- Lt.-Colonel Henry Delmé-Radcliffe.
- Charles Hilliard Donald.
- Lt.-Commander Arthur Evans, R.N.
- (Mrs.) Audrey Gordon.
- Major Claude Graham.
- Ludlow Griscom.
- Eardley Holland, F.R.C.S.
- George Rayner Humphreys.
- Eng. Lt.-Commander Harold Hugh Huxham,  
D.S.O., R.N.
- Charles Wilfred Janson.
- Alexander Edward Jones.
- Captain Lewis Richard William Loyd.
- Frank Ludlow, M.A.
- Leonard Percival Luke.
- Colonel Alexander Francis Mackenzie, C.M.G.,  
M.V.O.
- Lt.-Colonel Henry William Madoc.
- Dr. Harold Joseph Moon, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.



Donald Woodward Musselwhite.  
Captain Thomas Nevill Carlton Nevill.  
John Newman.  
Harry Victor O'Donel.  
Montagu Austin Phillips, F.L.S., F.Z.S.  
Captain William Watt Addison Phillips.  
Herbert Pratt.  
Bernard John Ringrose.  
Ernest Marcellus Skea.  
Desmond Abel Smith.  
Harry Kirke Swann, F.Z.S.  
Lt.-Colonel Cudbert John Massy Thornhill,  
C.M.G., D.S.O.  
Major Edward Hugh Ward, R.M.A.  
Frederick John Waydelin.  
William Beare Incedon Webber.  
Commander Alec Thomas Lee Wilson, J.P., R.N.

The Committee recommended that in order to meet the increase in the size of the Union since its inception, the number of elected members of the Committee should be increased from three to six, making a total with the official number, of nine. This recommendation on being put to the vote, was carried unanimously.

The Committee, having recently had under consideration the accounts of rare or hitherto unknown bird visitors to Great Britain, felt it very desirable that some means should be employed by which these reports might be investigated and stamped with the Authority of the Union before being generally accepted. They accordingly proposed that the present Committee which deals with the B. O. U. List of British Birds should be enlarged and should in future deal with all cases of this nature, in addition to seeing that the list itself is kept up to date in every respect.

The Committee therefore proposed that a new Rule 16 should stand as follows :—

“ A Committee of nine elected members and the  
“ Honorary Secretary of the Union as Secretary to

“the Committee, with powers to co-opt shall be appointed to consider records of occurrences of rare and hitherto unknown Bird Visitors to Great Britain, and their decision upon the authenticity of the record shall be published in the number of ‘The Ibis’ next following the date of their decision.”

An amendment to this was proposed by Mr. Bonhote, and seconded by Mr. Smalley :

“That the Committee of the B. O. U. be asked to consider the records of rare and hitherto unknown Bird Visitors to Great Britain and generally to keep the Union List up to date and that their decisions, if any, be published once a year in the April number of ‘The Ibis’ ”.

After considerable discussion the amendment was put to the vote and lost by thirty votes to eight.

Lord Rothschild then proposed and Mr. Evans seconded :

“That the Committee be elected for five years and run to coincide with the election of the President.”

The Committee accepted this amendment, and the original proposal as amended by Lord Rothschild was then put to vote and carried by a very large majority.

Rule 16 will therefore read :

“A Committee of nine elected members and the Honorary Secretary of the Union as Secretary to the Committee with powers to co-opt shall be appointed to consider records of occurrences of rare and hitherto unknown Bird Visitors to Great Britain, and their decision upon the authenticity of the record shall be published in the number of ‘The Ibis’ next following the date of their decision. The nine members shall be elected every five years and their election shall coincide with the election of the President of the Union.”

The Committee recommended that in addition to the present members consisting of Dr. Eagle Clarke, Mr. W.

L. Sclater, Dr. N. Ticehurst, and the present Honorary Secretary of the Union, that Mr. A. H. Evans, Dr. E. J. O. Hartert, Mr. T. Iredale, Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, Mr. G. M. Mathews, and Mr. H. F. Witherby be elected.

The proposition was put to the meeting and, after several members had spoken on the matter, was carried by a majority of thirty-two.

The Committee recommended that the Entrance Fee to the Union be increased to £4, and that the sale of 'The Ibis' to the public be at the rate of 10s. per number, and that in future members purchasing back numbers shall pay 8s. per number. This was put to the meeting and carried unanimously. Rule 5 will therefore read as follows:—

“Every new Ordinary Member shall pay an Entrance Fee of £4, and an Annual Subscription of £1 5s. on his election, and every Ordinary Member shall pay an Annual Subscription of £1 5s. on the 1st January of each year. Every new Ordinary Member failing to pay his Entrance Fee and his first Annual Subscription before the 31st December immediately following his election shall have his election annulled, unless he shall furnish a satisfactory explanation.”

Votes of thanks to the Zoological Society proposed by the Rev. J. R. Hale and seconded by Mr. A. L. Butler, to the Auditor and Scrutineers proposed by Mr. J. L. Bonhote and seconded by Mr. G. M. Mathews, were carried unanimously.

Mr. D. Seth Smith proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, and Major C. W. Smeed to the Honorary Secretary, which were carried with acclamation.

The usual Dinner was held later in the evening at Pagani's Restaurant, in conjunction with the British Ornithologists' Club, which attracted a record attendance.